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ABSTRACT

Recently, there have been some major changes in the theory and practice of social services, social welfare, and social work. However, instead of the major educational modifications necessary to accompany these changes, minor curriculum changes have taken place. The need to modify education programs is severe at the undergraduate level, and associate and bachelor degrees need to be reflective of a more modern multi-faceted reality. Education must be provided in a manner that will maximize students' facility in adjusting to the realities of the workplace, and programs must be developed to permit increased vocational mobility, permit students to move from social work to allied fields, and allow others to move to social work from related areas. The most glaring deficiencies in the programs have been in business related skill development. Students need to be able to understand how the agencies in which they will work operate financially and where and how agencies obtain funding and should have enough business skills to prepare budgets for departments and clients and write grants and proposals that include financial justification. In a society where there is competition among social service and allied health agencies, a basic understanding of marketing is necessary for agencies to survive. A multi-tracked program which includes urban community studies with a business emphasis, computer skills, and social services components has been developed for the two year associate degree program as both an applied and transferable program. (AEM)

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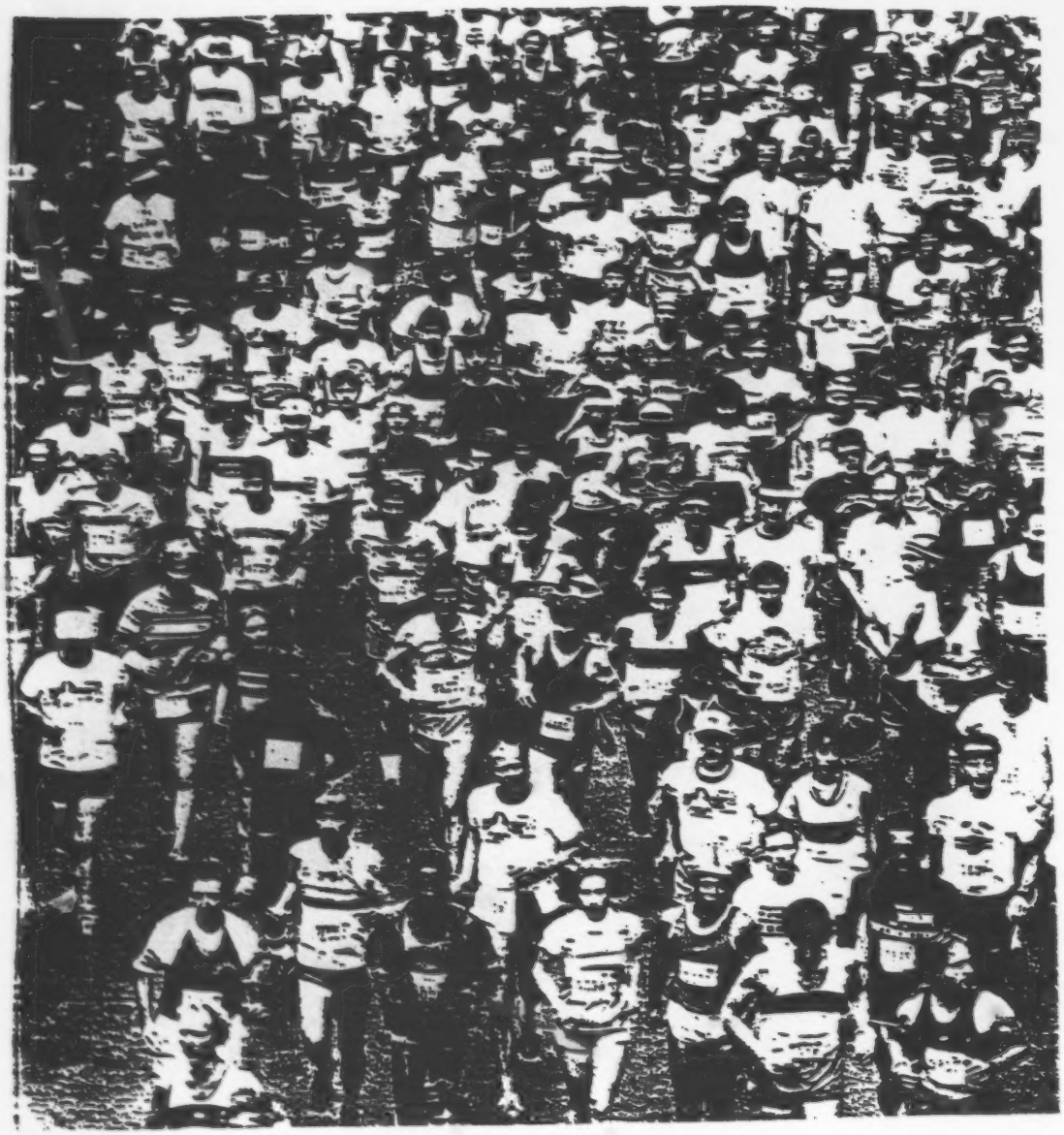

MOTIVATING THE POTENTIAL SOCIALWORKER

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Motivating the Potential Social Worker

A Working Paper for Presentation
Ohio College Association of Social Work Educators
October 17, 1987

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ABSTRACT

"Motivating the Potential Social Worker: Business, Urban, and Community Studies in the Community College"

Over the last years, we have seen some major changes in the theory and practice of social services, social welfare, and social work. During this time, though, all we have done is tinker with the curriculum. We have not accepted the need to make major modification. At the undergraduate level, the need to change our education programs is severe. The associate and bachelor degrees need to be reflective of a more modern multi-faceted reality. We need to provide education in a manner that will maximize the students' facility in adjusting to the realities of the workplace. (The best way to reduce burnout is prevention.) We must develop education programs that allow some students to "jump out" of social work into allied fields and allow others to "jump in" from related areas.

One of the most glaring lacks in our programs has been business and business related skill development. Students need to be able to understand how the agencies in which they will work operate financially and where and how agencies obtain funding; and they should have enough business skills to prepare budgets for departments and clients and write grants and proposals that include financial justifications. In a society where there is competition among social service and allied health agencies, a basic understanding of marketing is necessary for agencies to survive.

A multi-tracked program which includes urban, community studies with business, computer, and social services components is developed in this paper for the two year associate degree program as both an applied and transferable program.

We are trying here to do several things at once:

. Strengthen the curriculum of the social services programs in the community college so that the individual who graduates with an associate's degree is better trained;
. Allow the student who determines social service isn't for him/her to change instructional tracks without too much loss of program time;
. Provide the student with the maximum flexibility in alternative careers in human/social services;
. Develop a program that doesn't simply train, but educates so that the student once a worker in the field does not develop "field shock" and has the generalizations necessary to handle new and unique situations ;
. Reduce the amount of duplication/gaps in the instructional programs in and between the first two years, and the second two years of the undergraduate program;
. Move away from the "fixation" on theory of the "ologies" and concentrate on the generalizations of the "arts and sciences".
. Assist the student in understanding and handling the complexity of relationships in the delivery of effective and efficienct social services and personal guidance and counseling.

There are at least a dozen more goals and objectives; they are not prioritized nor most probably, all cannot be accomplished and some compromises are obviously necessary but these are the directions in which we should be going.

As a working paper, we have attempted to provide grist for the proverbial mill. The readers may not agree will all or even most of what we say, but if it causes us to examine social work education and make even the smallest modification that helps social workers do their job better, we will be satisfied.

Business and Business Related Skill Development

Most colleges and universities offering degrees in social services educate and train students in case management, group work, community organization, and social services planning. However, many social workers ultimately find themselves in positions where some of the major emphases of their work is managing offices and personnel, budgeting, writing grant proposals, and marketing agency services. Their plight is similar to that of the nurse who is trained in patient care finding herself in a managerial head nurse position without the slightest idea of how to manage workers from her own and different disciplines; or the physician who

is the chief executive officer of a hospital and does not understand the rudiments of business. The result of lack of business education is lack of efficiency and effectiveness of both time and money and frustration and defensiveness on the part of the underprepared social worker. Many health care organizations are dealing with this problem of ineptitude by hiring people with bachelor's and master's degrees in business. While this practice certainly puts agencies on a more sound business basis, we are concerned that some of the richness and soundness of decision-making relative to those who use social services is lost because of ignorance of client-related matters by the manager degreed only in business. Another trend finds social workers at both the bachelor and masters level returning to school to obtain M.B.A.s. Reasons stated are often that they have found themselves in dead-end positions or positions that were frustrating for them. While the latter trend indeed produces well-rounded individuals who are excellently credentialed to manage, market, and budget for social service agencies, the toll of the extra time out for school is costly for them in time and money lost. We suggest a solution for this dilemma in which the discipline of business, which provides them an organized picture of the universe that they would not ordinarily get, can be learned without the time lost, and maybe more importantly, integrated into the basic social work education. Specifically, whether courses, segments of courses, or modules of instruction in a variety of forms, the following should be learned.

1. Rudiments of management and marketing for non-profit agencies. These disciplines can be combined because they build significantly on the skills being taught in schools of social work. The social worker-manager must learn how to budget time and prioritize tasks both for him/herself and his staff. This is especially true in social service agencies where unforeseen crises are sometimes the norm. Often issues arise in agencies due to conflicts among different disciplines, especially direct care-givers and support staff, that must be resolved by the manager. These critical skills require an understanding of individuals and groups that is taught to social workers, but further the manager must understand many important decisions have to be made where so-called understanding and "niceness" greatly impairs the efficiency and effectiveness of the agency or department. Social worker-managers are often at the extremes of being too understanding or too dictatorial largely because they were not trained in office management techniques and the consequences of these techniques. Minimally, the social-worker manager needs to be taught what he/she doesn't know so that he/she knows enough to consult with business people before things get out of control.

The programs of many agencies and sometimes agencies themselves have failed because social worker-managers do not understand the rudiments of marketing. The tendency today

for such managers is to "sell" what the agency has to provide. What they do not understand is that selling and advertising are not marketing. If social workers are taught the basic four P's of marketing, their campaigns will be more efficient and effective.

Product: They must ascertain if there are people who need and want their product. If not, can enough people be made aware that this product would be useful for them? Many agencies have felt that they have had a good product or service, but the public could have cared less. The presentation of the product has to be matched to the potential client; one should not try to force a square peg into a round hole

Place: Many good projects have failed because the place or time the services were provided were not consistent with the needs of the clients.

Promotion: Many projects have failed because the agency has failed to present its program in a way that makes sense to the business world. For instance, if an agency is trying to market an employee assistance program to a company without having worked out the financial details, and the presenter is presenting without wearing a tie, the venture will probably fail. Often agencies do not have much money for promotional activities and need to have someone in charge who is aware of the costs/benefits of various means of promotion, especially media (printed, audio, visual) promotions.

Price: A manager must be able to project how much a certain project will cost and what the benefits will be. He/she must also be able to determine what the public will/can pay for a service. It is interesting to note here, that sometime the mistake is made of offering services too cheaply thus giving the consumer the idea that the service is not worthwhile.

2. Budgeting and Grant Writing:

The social worker-manager must learn to understand exactly how his/her agency is funded and further to understand the sources of funding and the politics involved. This is the basic prerequisite for understanding how much money the agency needs and can get and who is most likely to grant additional funds for various activities. Further, the social-worker manager should know basic rudiments of operational and capital budgeting so that reasonable planning can occur. Many public agency workers have been laid off because their managers have not been able to forecast expenses properly. The social worker-manager is in a better position than a business manager when in the position of necessary budget cuts to know where the cuts can be made with a minimal amount of damage to the programs, personnel, and clients. He/she has to learn also how to argue effectively for a rational budget.

3. Computers:

Social workers should be taught at the very least enough basic computer skills to overcome "computer phobia". Most agencies have a variety of software packages that they

expect managers to be able to use. We suggest a few workshops be designed in computer software packages to teach the rudiments of how to operate the user-friendly, menu-driven packages available. At least one spreadsheet package, such as Lotus 1-2-3, and one word processing package, such PFS Write, should be taught.

The dyadic relationship remains the focus of social work. We do not mean to contend that the social worker does not perceive large aggregations; rather that the orientation of business has more complicated relevant interactions and interrelationships as in the complex example of original producer -wholesaler - shipper - retailer - customer interrelations.

Learning in business can also help the social worker distinguish among antecedents, contributing factors, attendant issues, and causes, which is important, not just for the business end, but for the delivery of effective services.

Need for Interdisciplinary Orientation

Education for social workers shoud be that - education, not just training. We are not simply preparing people with skills to do a specific job. Rather it is our decision that our students learn the why, not just the what and how of social services. We feel that the social work student should be taught from the beginning of his/her education to work as if he were part of an interdisciplinary team. While social workers often find themselves members of interdisciplinary teams, some do not. In the latter instance, we feel that social workers should behave as if they are a members of an interdisciplinary team and develop and have a pool of professionals to whom they can refer when problems arise that are out of the social work realm.

1. Sociology is primary for the social worker. Behaviors that require interventional behaviors that do not have a medical basis are often best understood within an interpersonal framework. We have consciously decided to ground our students in studies (case studies in particular) of the group, the organization, the institution, the social system and their processes, interpersonl and intergroup relations, bureaucracy, budgets, and politics.

2. However, the social worker must be taught enough abnormal and developmental psychology to understand individual illnesses that require psychiatric and psychological intervention instead of, or as well as, treatment of the individual in the framework of family and society. While social workers are not competent to diagnose, it is imperative that the social worker recognize individual symptoms well enough to make a referral to a physician, psychiatrist, or psychologist for diagnosis and/or treatment. This knowledge is essential for even those social workers who feel they are not likely to come in contact with psychiatric illness. It has been demonstrated that groups of people

requiring social work exhibit a greater proportion of psychiatric illness than the general population. Not to have this knowledge may result in suicides in depressed or schizophrenic individuals as well as other violent and destructive activities and needless suffering. By being able to make a referral, the social worker is behaving as if he is part of an interdisciplinary team, whether or not the referral is intra-agency.

We believe that psychology is often improperly taught to the community college social work student. The student most often is required to take the two general principles of psychology courses taught at the school. These courses are designed to give students a foundation for studying other courses in psychology. In survey courses of these types, the student is often given an overview of the field in many areas without the in-depth study of any particular area to be able to use it at all in practice. We suggest that two psychology courses be designed that better fit the needs of the person who plans to work in the field. These would focus on major psychiatric, psychological, and developmental disturbances and chemical abuses that the student is most likely to encounter in the field. Other major focuses would be treatments for these disturbances, delivery systems for these treatments, and how to make referrals. Other elective courses in psychology, including principles of psychology, should be available according to the interests and needs of the students and community conditions.

3. Social workers must be taught to be cooperative members of interdisciplinary teams. This often includes learning the terminology and "buzz words" of other disciplines. This facilitates communication and saves time. A major concern especially expressed by medical professionals is that social workers too often see their jobs as limited to "working with the family and making aftercare arrangements" without bothering to learn in depth what the patient/client is suffering from. A case manager cannot do an adequate job if he or she does not understand the diagnosis, including symptoms and prognosis, of the illnesses he must deal with and a knowledge of medications and their side effects used to treat various illnesses. For example, needless suffering has been caused because families have been inadequately advised by the social worker that schizophrenic relatives may improve by taking medication, but that the medication treats only the symptoms and does not cure the disease. The consequence of those families' ignorance is that they sometimes allow or encourage the patient to stop taking the medication resulting in a serious relapse of the illness. Also, the family must be advised, in the case of a schizophrenic relative on medication, of the uncomfortable side effects of the medication so that they can be supportive of the family member and not be alarmed by his discomfort or seek a consultation if the side effects are too extreme.

From these examples, we hope to illustrate that the

education of the social worker must include instilling the knowledge that he or she must be willing to learn on the job from other people in various disciplines as well as to use diagnostic manuals and other resourses available. This includes teaching the student to ask and how to ask when he needs help. Since the social worker can find him or herself in a plethora of different jobs, the questions will be as diverse as the agency, and all cannot be taught in the "school of social work". For instance, a case manager in a psychiatric hospital may have to learn how to read lab reports and learn how to deal with potentially violent or violent people. The child abuse investigator may have to learn Appalachian idiosyncrasies if working in the Tremont area in Cleveland, and the worker in mother and infant programs will have to learn to spot developmental lags in babies. We contend that this "continuing education" skill that should be a life-long committment on the part of social workers can best be instilled by exposing the student to many different types of agencies before he or she begins his major field placement. This can be done by arranging cooperative placements in various classes where the student may work in the agency for a few hours even at mundane clerical tasks to get a feel for the differences, arranging for workers from various agencies to decribe their jobs in detail, and holding discussion groups among students placed in diverse situations. These methods will also help the student pick an area of social work which best suits his interests and skills.

4. The "chutzpah factor" should be taught. This factor comes to play when the social worker knows something is right (or wrong) and is willing to challenge a superior or someone in another agency. While ethics and moral behavior are now taught, not much is taught about what to do when one finds him or herself in what appears to be a no win dangerous situation. This is perhaps best explained by example. What should the student do if he or she is treating a foster child in a well-documented abusive home, and the county worker fails to acknowledge the situation let alone remove the child? We tell him to approach his supervisor with the problem. Well, the supervisor suggests to the student that county is slow anyway, so drop it. Then we say, okay, go to the county worker's supervisor. The student does this and meets the same resistence. Our student has exhausted all avenues of recourse after awhile, and the situation worsens. Should the student threaten to go to the Plain Dealer? Sure! That's chutzpah and may save the child.

Another example: Your student is a case manager in a psychiatric hospital. The psychiatrist in charge is insisting upon discharging a patient who is a known pedophile and is currently telling the student that he is hearing little girls asking him to fondle them. The patient is also bragging to the student that he is palming his medication. The student has reported all these happenings to the

psychiatrist who remains strident. Should the student take his case to the Chief Executive Officer after exhausting all other avenues? You bet. That's chutzpah, and that's right!

Students also need to be taught to act in the best interest of the client in a dangerous situation even if it means going against the client's wish. Almost everyone who has worked in the field for a number of years has a "war story" where something dreadful happened because he or she did not want to hurt the client's feelings, or were too intimidated by the client. For instance, some of us have had depressed clients who seemed to worsen and we did not feel right about them but decided to take the client's word that things would be okay. Later, we learn that he or she have committed suicide shortly after we talked with him. Another too common example, is not placing a child in an abusive situation because we like the mother and desparately want to give her a chance (or another chance). Later, we find the child injured or dead.

Students need to be taught to distinguish among what situations are truly dangerous versus situations in which differing opinions can be tolerated. They must be taught that the chutzpah factor will not work unless they have documented the situation totally with dates, times, witnesses, etc., using the proper terminology. If possible, the documentation should be included in reports and hospital charts. Threats without proper documentation will only cause bad feelings and worsen the situation. The student also needs to be aware that despite proper documentation, whistle blowing often results in the whistle blower losing his or her job. However, the alternative is unethical, immoral, and dangerous. Hopefully, our students would prefer not to work under such continuing conditions anyway. We suggest that an excellent way to promote this learning is, again, by case studies and bringing in professionals from the field to discuss their "war stories".

The second type of situation that sometimes requires chutzpah is the overload situation. We all know of situations where social workers are required to carry outrageous case loads which threaten both the worker and his clients. Students need to be taught what is reasonable to expect of them, what is reasonable in periods where overwork is necessary, and what is simply outrageous. "Burnout" is an important part of this instruction. When the worker is piled with so much work that he cannot manage it properly, he has to learn to say no. If this does not work, he again must go through channels, think of creative alternatives, or quit if need be. (Teaching "intrapreneurship" in the business class may help!) This is often extremely difficult to do when workers need the income. However, students must be taught that this kind of attitude is necessary (even though not sufficient) to bring about change and protect the public. Social work must be perceived as having high professional standards by our students. Perhaps, the old days of social workers as instigators need to be revived in this instance.

There are two other areas we feel would contribute directly to the learnings of potential social workers. But, more than that, what we are attempting to stress is not interdisciplinary education (which is almost ready to fade as a trend [read: fashion]), but the knowledge and skills bases of learning in human services. All too often we get so involved in teaching that which has to be taught, i.e., content, that we forget that our students need to learn more than what the current "state of the art" is. We have included urban and community studies as, first, rational applied fields that our students will need to know, and, second, because students will learn a methodology of field work that is unavailable any other way.

Urban Studies

Three major components are studied; geography, culture and politics; and through them urban problems.* In the first, we examine the geographic study of cities and their regions and emphasize areal aspects of urban centers, the arrangements of cities in space and their internal patterns, especially human behavior and the impact of resources, natural and man-made. In the second, we examine the cultural diversity within urban populations with special emphasis of the interaction of groups and value systems. The student will then be able not only to describe the variety of culture among urban populations, and understand the processes which maintain culture diversity, but will be able to function within the urban area and the various cultures. In the third component, we study the policies, programs, politics, and problems of U.S. cities. Inner cities, suburbs, exurbs, and transitional areas are characterized and analyzed. Emphasis is placed upon the endeavors to make cities function more efficiently, and to improve the quality of life of their inhabitants.

The student then is able to describe:

.the nature of the city as an environment of complex human, social economic, cultural, and political forces,

.how cultural, class, ethnic, and racial pluralism add to the richness of the urban environment, yet, make more difficult the process of decision making and problem solving,

.how city governments are organized, what functions they perform, the role of politics in the decision making process, how city governments can be made more efficient and responsive in meeting the needs of the community.

*We have not resolved the issue of Rural Studies.

Through the application of field/case studies, using the student's local and metropolitan community, he/she can then analyze:

.the major problems of the present day city, such as poverty, unemployment, housing, crime, finances, education, racial tensions, transportation, and community renewal,

.the community power structures; pluralism vs. elitism, etc,

.the conventional channels of citizen influence in the decision making process: public opinion, political parties, interest groups, collective and aggregate behavior, the media and elections.

A summary activity related to social work might be to demonstrate how the process of federalism relates to the city, e.g., block grants.

Community Studies

Community Studies are the foundation for helping students understand the rich social and cultural diversity of the United States and their local community. It will help them understand and appreciate both their city and local neighborhoods. They will learn about the contributions, differences, and similarities of the various groups with whom they will work. They will be better prepared to live and work in a multicultural, multiethnic, and multifaceted environment. It is our premise that community studies will generate ideas and materials for other learnings, particularly those that lead to the best proactive involvement of the social worker in his/her community. Knowledges and skills gained in these areas will help not just the social worker, but the community activist who is concerned enough to want to do something.
Much of the recent literature in the social services has concentrated on or addressed the issues of the individual's and America's search for community in the midst of rapid change and social diversity and conflict. While the courses described here were developed for the Cleveland community, they are readily adaptable to any environment.

History of Immigration in America: This course analyzes the how and why America became a home for diverse nationalities and races from the rest of the world. It will explain how each group's background, time of arrival, settlements, and assimilation helped shape their life in America. The course explores the relationships between and among different groups. It also explores the groups' contribution to America and how cultural differences have to be understood,

tolerated, and celebrated as an asset.

History of Cleveland: This course analyzes the development of Cleveland from a New England village and outpost to a metropolitan area of over one million people. It examines the role of economic and technological change, immigration, reform, wars, demographics, labor unions, transportation, and political leadership. Students study using oral history and documentary analysis techniques how each major era of the city shaped the present and influence the future.

Ethnic and Minority Communities: This course provides students with an understanding of the city's neighborhoods. Emphasis is placed on analyzing how and why the city became an industrial metropolis of diverse immigrant and migrant communities. The course also explores the extent to which various groups achieve or fail to achieve a sense of community and then assimilate or develop enclaves within the host society. Religious institutions, the family and work patterns, fraternal and mutual benefit societies, public and parochial education, and other political social institutions will be treated from the perspective of their role in the formation and maintenance of communities in the metropolitan area.

The method of teaching/learning in this area is intricately interrelated to the area's content. We must stress that the student must be the actor in his/her learning. This means immersion in the community. While the cultural shock may be very real, it is imperative that the student know intimately the environment in which he/she will work. With the proper direction and supervision, we may be in the position of reducing "burnout," providing more effective services, and actually improving the quality of life of our communities.

Need for Teaching the Student to Cope with Feelings

Most social workers encounter feelings about their client/patient/customers (Changes in terminology haven't helped either!) that are troublesome at best. Feelings and prejudices are elicited by clients that sometimes the worker was not aware he or she had. These are sometimes poignant and often create such cognitive dissonance that the social worker pays more attention to himself than the matter at hand. Sooner or later one is faced with his own overwhelming disgust, or just as distressing, love for a person or persons with whom he has a professional relationship. There are several ways to deal with this problem.

1. Require all social work students to participate in encounter groups so that they can become aware of at least some of their hidden feelings and prejudices. Resolution or at least coping with some of these troublesome feelings should be addressed in the group.

2. Transference and counter transference and characteristics of neighborhoods, families, individuals, clients in agencies, etc. in areas where the students are likely to work should be taught so there are minimal surprises, and students can work on anticipated feelings before they arise. Role plays are helpful for dealing with feelings.

3. Supervisors must encourage students to talk about troublesome feelings without fear of reprisal or being made to feel a failure. Often students are ashamed of feelings and will not bring them up spontaneously.

4. All the above methods must use the principle, among others, of teaching students that feelings are not right or wrong but may interfere with their work. With practice, the student can learn to focus on the situation and thereby attenuate (not sublimate) his own feelings when necessary. If a problem still remains, he needs to learn how to seek the sympathetic ear of a colleague or supervisor.

A major pitfall of all helping professionals, and especially, social workers, is that they begin to feel that they can cure people or situations by caring alone. Social workers need to be taught that there is a fine line between caring and making people dependent. While one can help precipitate or facilitate change by caring, one must always keep in mind that the actual change lies within those <u>people themselves</u> one is trying to help, not within the social worker. Two gripes of other professionals working with social workers are that they get so involved with giving warm fuzzies that they fail to be objective. An example is the social worker who accompanies his or her patient to the food stamp office when the patient is perfectly capable of doing it himself, but the patient (or the social worker) just wants the company. The other is that sometimes social workers tend to want those with whom they are working to dish out warm fuzzies to them or each other at the expense of more important behaviors. An example may be the social worker who focuses on the relationship of the husband and wife in a family where everyone is literally hungry. Social workers need to be cautioned to prioritize their own and others' behaviors in a situation and use caring as a tool, not as an end. Again, they must realize that they are not the primary change agent, but facilitators for the people with whom they work. If the primary job of the social worker is to make sure that his schizophrenic patient stays on medication, then he must do that before he starts encouraging the patient to develop relationships with the opposite sex so he may feel better.

Lastly, and perhaps, most importantly, social workers need to learn to <u>enjoy</u> the people with whom they work. If a helping professional can enjoy his/her clients, this demonstrates respect and regard for their humanity. All of us must learn to get beyond the labels of our

client/patient/customers to understand them as people. It's okay to laugh at their jokes, appreciate it when they're clever, cheer their successes, mourn their failures, and deplore their stupidity. All people can be interesting, fun, and exciting. When clients are with the social worker or the social worker is working on their behalf, nothing should be more important. When the professional is stewing about clients while he's at home in the bathtub, there is a problem. Perhaps the best way to teach social workers to enjoy their clients and lead a balanced life is to encourage them to get as involved in the situations and community as possible while at work and then let it go. Many supervisors have stated that students that they worried about being overly involved as students ended up being the best social workers, so intensity is not the problem. Intensity, hard work, and joy on the job is exercising the mind. Just as one feels better physically after physical exercise when he are occupied with other things, the helping professional feels better mentally after a good day's work.